



Illinois Wesleyan University Digital Commons @ IWU

All oral histories

Oral Histories

2018

Suan Guess-Hanson

Suan Guess-Hanson '64

Illinois Wesleyan University

Recommended Citation

Guess-Hanson '64, Suan, "Suan Guess-Hanson" (2018). *All oral histories*. 150.
https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/oral_hist/150

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Commons @ IWU by the faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Suan Guess-Hanson: This is Suan Guess-Hanson. I was an art major here. My name was Suan Guess at the time. I am a townie. I grew up in Bloomington, and I came to Wesleyan partly because I came here as a high school student and junior high student. I had come to Bloomington-Normal Art Association classes for junior high kids that Fred Brian taught in the building on Saturday mornings, and then when I was in high school I began taking flute lessons from Carl Petkoff who was on faculty in the music school. I also attended music camp... Illinois Wesleyan's Music Camp out at East Bay at Lake Bloomington for a couple of years probably 1957 and '58. My brothers attended Wesleyan as well. Jack, my oldest brother, whose 11 years older than I am graduated in 1953 in business administration, and his future wife Ruth Hodgskiss, who also graduated in 1953, was a commercial art major. So I had been on campus and had seen things they were doing. Then, my brother Don, who graduated in 1953, in biology, was just a year ahead of me. I started in the fall of 1960 as an art major. I was involved in some things on campus. My freshman year I was in Alpha Lamda Delta, the freshman women's... I guess it was an honorary society... I was in Green Medallion my sophomore year. Egas my junior year, and I can't remember what the senior year group was that I was... Was it Phi Kappa Phi, and then I was also in an art honorary. I don't remember the name of that one either. I joined Alpha Omicron Pi my second semester of my freshman year, and I never did live in the house, and the one job I was able to have was recording secretary because I would go every Monday for dinner with the group, and then we would have our chapter meetings. One of the things they encouraged us to do as a sorority was be involved on campus, and I was able to be a part of the religious education or religious activities commission, and my senior year I did a religious activities weekend about art and religion, and I'd had the opportunity to go out to San Francisco before that to learn more about art and religion and brought some of the people that I was involved with out there to do the event on campus. So being involved, doing things across campus, involved with various leadership activities, was something that was really encouraged in my sorority. Some of the faculty people that I really meant a lot to me and remember many things about them to this day were Carl Petkoff who was my flute teacher I'd started taking lessons from him in ninth grade through high school and even when I was a freshman here at Wesleyan, and then, I played with him... I was like second chair flutist in the Bloomington-Normal Symphony for a couple of years. In the Art Department, Rupert Kilgore was the head of the school, and he did all the lectures on art history, and it was fascinating to sit in the darkened room and look at all these slides, and he never used notes but he would tell you all the history about it, particularly things that he talked about through religious aspects to the works of art, and then Fred Brian was my painting and printmaking teacher. Our print making workshop I think was in the basement of Blackstock Hall, and it was always smelly down there with all the chemicals that were there, but it was a fun place to do a lot of things, and I think maybe my junior year they had studio space, so still living in town, I was able to have a spot of my own in

my studio, and it was an old house, that we had different rooms that we used, and I don't believe that's on campus anymore. Another professor that I really enjoyed was Emily Scott Dunn Dale, and she did the intro to sociology our freshman year. She had a lot of interesting things to say, and I believe she was my brother Don's favorite teacher. So I sort of came under his...along the tails of his work. I spent a lot of time at Buck Library studying because it was nice to be able to stay on campus all day when I had classes. Probably one of the most significant things that occurred the four years that I was there from 1960 to 1964 was in the November of 1963 when we were taking our graduate record exams in the Memorial Center and that was the day JFK was killed. I don't recall ever hearing the results of that exam, but after lunch, the exam proctor said something like President Kennedy died at 1:00pm in Dallas. We will now turn to page whatever it was and continue the exam. Of course it was just the whole place we couldn't believe what we had just heard. People were audibly crying. And just trying to understand what had happened, and that was so much to process at the time, and I just remember going home, and just sort of being glued to the TV for the whole weekend. And one of the pieces we would hear repeatedly on the TV news was that Samuel Barber's serenade and to this day every time I hear it I think about that time. Big changes that I've seen on the campus since I left the many new buildings that are here and there's a much more diverse student body than when I was there and I've participated in several concerts and things over at the Evelyn chapel, which is a beautiful space to sing in. Then I am going to be in I currently sing in Cantus Novus, which will be performing works that go along with the St. John's bible that is currently on display here at Illinois Wesleyan, so we're looking forward to that concert on October 28th. Some favorite stories I think some of the people that I met here and stayed in touch with coming back for our 50th class reunion four years ago was a lot of fun to kind of learn how we've changed and what has happened and I think a lot of people do not come back for Homecoming because of how far away they are, other activities that they are doing, health concerns, it could be some other things. But I don't think I came very often before, but since I worked on the Homecoming committee for our 50th, it's been fun to come back to campus, and I especially enjoy the back to campus classes, to hear what current faculty are doing, and what recent alumni are doing is really an exciting thing to be part of.

I know many of the current faculty, and it's been interesting to meet Andrew Shalow who is playing in the recorder group that I am currently in. I also attend the new music symposium events at Wesleyan. I try to go to some of the different concerts and recitals, and it's really marvelous to have these opportunities as a community member to be able to participate so I appreciate that Wesleyan has kept up this tradition of sharing knowledge, information, all the people that they bring to campus, that the public at large are invited to join and participate in. It's been a good experience for me and it continues to this day, so I am a proud golden titan. I am just glad for the experience that I had here as a student and community member.